

THE MICRONESIA CHALLENGE

A Regional Commitment to Conserve Micronesia's Natural Resources

the micronesia challenge

We, the Chief Executives of Western Micronesia, in order:

To sustain our unique island biodiversity;

To ensure a healthy future for our island people;

To protect our unique island cultures;

To guard the foundations of our future development, our pristine island environments;

To sustain the livelihoods of our island communities; and

To contribute to global targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the Programmes of Work of the Convention on Biological Diversity,

Agree to effectively conserve at least 30% of near-shore marine and 20% of forest resources across Micronesia by 2020.

Tommy Remengesau, Jr, President, Republic of Palau

Felix Perez Camacho, Governor, Guam

Kessai Note, President, Republic of the Marshall Islands

Redley Killion, Vice President, for Joseph Urusemal, President, Federated States of Micronesia

Benigno R. Fitial, Governor, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas



Rock Islands, Palau ©Jez O'Hare

A vast Pacific seascape nearly the size of the United States, Micronesia contains some of Earth's richest variety of plant and animal life and five times the marine diversity of the U.S. and its territories. The region's highly diverse marine and terrestrial resources are the natural capital for the local people, who are traditional stewards of their lands and waters.

Due to a unique combination of geographic isolation and biological diversity, Micronesia's islands are exemplary microcosms for conservation, with habitats and natural communities found nowhere else on Earth. Yet the features that make these islands unique also make them

especially vulnerable to environmental threats such as deforestation, unsustainable fishing practices, and invasive species. Half of the species in the world that have become extinct have been island species. Without immediate action, Micronesia's islands face continued damage to their natural diversity and the survival of local people's way of life.

The Micronesia Challenge

Recognizing the growing threats to Micronesia's natural resources, the region's heads of government launched the Micronesia Challenge, which aims to effectively conserve 30% of near-shore marine resources



Forest in Madolenimw, Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia ©Jez O'Hare

and 20% of forest resources by 2020. This ambitious challenge far exceeds current goals set by international conventions and treaties, which call for countries to conserve 10% of marine and terrestrial resources by 2012. The challenge also emphasizes the need for Micronesian leaders to work together at the regional level to confront environmental and sustainable development issues.

The Micronesia Challenge serves as a global model for strengthening island conservation and safeguarding some of the world's richest biodiversity. The Challenge participants—Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Marshall Islands, and the U.S. territories of Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands—represent nearly 5% of the Pacific Ocean and 7% of its coastlines, and will collectively protect a marine area equal in size to the Gulf of Mexico.

Building International Support

At the Eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held in March 2006 in Curitiba, Brazil, leaders from Micronesia's island nations joined together to announce the Micronesia Challenge. President Tommy Remengesau, Jr. of Palau hosted a

special launch event which emphasized the need for global and regional partnerships to strengthen Micronesians' capacity to meet their conservation commitments. Recognizing the unique contribution of islands to global biodiversity, over 180 countries adopted the Island Biodiversity Programme of Work, which lays out guidance for island nations and nations with islands for integrated conservation and management of their vital natural resources.

In support of the Micronesia Challenge, The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International each committed \$3 million towards conservation across Micronesia. The \$6 million pledge is designed to generate matching funds from other financing sources, including donor countries, the Global Environment Facility, and regional finance mechanisms. The match, when fulfilled, will result in \$18 million of sustainable financing for conservation and protected areas across Micronesia.

The Nature Conservancy's Role

In addition to providing financial support, the Conservancy is promoting island conservation by participating in the Global Island Partnership, a new initiative that supports the Is-

land Biodiversity Programme of Work and other global policy processes. The partnership aims to mobilize leadership and action for the conservation and sustainable use of island resources, catalyze strategic partnerships to deliver political, technical, and financial support, strengthen systems to share skills, information, and resources, and build public and private support for island conservation around the world.

The Conservancy also works directly with Micronesian governments and partner organizations to support the launch and implementation of the Micronesia Challenge. This work includes: 1) developing *conservation strategies and plans*, including National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans; 2) establishing and expanding *local partnerships* between government agencies and NGOs engaged in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; 3) expanding communication and interaction with *local communities and traditional leadership*; 4) sharing *experience, tools, and techniques* among Micronesian officials, conservation practitioners, and community leaders; 5) establishing *sustainable financing mechanisms*; 6) engaging the region's development and trading partners, as well as NGOs and private foundations, in *financial and technical support*; and 7) further engaging Pacific Island programs and facilities to optimize *regional coordination and financing*.

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